



## BEYOND PESTICIDES CONTROL PESTS WITHOUT POISON

**H**AS THE WINTER WEATHER caused bugs and pests to seek shelter inside the walls, nooks and crannies of your home? Before you reach for the bug spray, consider implementing these chemical-free strategies for driving pesky critters away:

- Clean up food and crumbs immediately.
- Keep food and garbage in tightly sealed containers.
- Repair torn screens and caulk any openings around your house.
- Use mechanical traps or low-toxicity products as a last resort.
- If possible, avoid using bug sprays containing DEET and chemical pesticides.

For more tips, visit [www.beyondpesticides.org](http://www.beyondpesticides.org).

## CLEAN UP YOUR TRACKS CUT DOWN ON INDOOR DIRT



**P**ERHAPS THE EASIEST WAY to cut down on household dirt is to leave shoes at the front door. Taking your shoes off at the door cuts down on 80 percent of dirt and pollutants tracked into a house. To get your family into the habit, place slippers and “indoor” shoes near the front door for easy access.

## CLEANING WITHOUT CHEMICALS SAVE MONEY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

**Y**OU DON'T NEED to spend a lot of money on organic cleaning products to be chemical-free. Cleaning without potentially harmful chemicals is possible and affordable by using products you may already have in your kitchen cabinet. All you need is baking soda, vinegar, borax and hydrogen peroxide. Follow these basic cleaning rules:

- **Baking soda** makes a good scouring agent and odor absorber.
- **Vinegar** mixed with water washes windows and mirrors wonderfully.
- **Borax** mixed with water makes a great disinfectant.
- **Hydrogen peroxide** is an effective bleaching agent.

For more safe cleaning tips and recipes, visit [www.healthylegacy.org](http://www.healthylegacy.org).

*Earth Action Heroes protect the earth. Whether it's saving energy or guarding Bloomington's precious natural resources, these individuals are making a difference. Here are your neighbors in action...*

## EARTH ACTION HEROES MEET THE GREEN GARDEN GROUPIES

**I**N JANUARY 2009, a group of environmentally conscious Bloomington friends, including Monica Williams, Nan and Glen Corliss, Mary Ann Dean, Eric Gabrielson with daughters Nina and Zoe, Carol Hobart and Karen Schaub, got together to form the Green Garden Groupies. Their goal: to grow an organic garden that would produce enough fruits and vegetables to feed their families and possibly provide food to others in need. The friends, some experienced gardeners, most not, turned a patch of Williams' yard into a robust garden in a matter of months.

How did they do it? A journal entry, dated April 2009 and kept by Groupie Carol Hobart, revealed the amount of planning and preparation that went into the project.

“Using wheelbarrows, the group spreads a mix of organic garden soil and compost over the ground and works the mixture into the hard-packed clay. Carol and Mary Ann create a garden plan using the group's plant list. They consider the size the plants will be at maturity and also what companion plants to use. Several members of the



group have already bought organic seeds. Now is the time to plant cool weather crops – lettuce, carrots, spinach and beets! We use only organic seedlings.”

According to Hobart, not everything went as planned; some plants had to be moved because they were too close together, moths invaded the cabbage and voles ate up the tomatoes. Overall the garden grew well without the use of chemicals. At any given time during the spring and summer one could find zucchini, beans, sweet peas, squash, cucumbers, potatoes, spinach, carrots, rhubarb, onions, beets, watermelon and more growing in the garden.

Groupie Mary Ann Dean, a self-described environmental activist who runs the Green Sanctuary at her church, said she feels a responsibility to future generations to teach them concern for the environment and the food they eat.

“Our group is concerned about pesticides and herbicides being used on our food because they don't wash off,”

## DID YOU KNOW?

According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, 95 percent of the pesticides used on lawns are classified as possible or probable carcinogens.

Dean said. “We also promote ‘ethical eating,’ which means concern for food producers and growing healthy and chemical-free foods.”

Every Monday night the group met to harvest their organic garden and enjoyed the fruits of their labors (in the form of desserts made by group members) on Williams' back porch. Everyone had their favorites. Nine-year-old Zoe was partial to the tomatoes, but her younger sister Nina liked the sweet peas best.

Although winter is upon us, the group is already thinking about expanding and what they will plant when the ground is warm again.

## YARD WASTE GOES GREEN NEW STATE LAW REQUIRES USE OF COMPOSTABLE BAGS

**T**HE PLASTIC BAGS typically used to collect fall leaves will no longer be accepted at the curb in Bloomington. Beginning in 2010, a new state law will require most metro-area residents to use compostable bags for yard waste.

All seven metro counties are included. Dakota County already bans the plastic leaf bags by county ordinance.

According to Public Works Project Manager Jean Buckley, plastic bags do not biodegrade or break down properly at compost sites.

Waste haulers pay more to dump the bags, because they must be emptied or separated from the waste at the composting sites. Composters can't use as much of the finished product because it is contaminated with shreds of plastic.

“When plastic leaf bags are shredded at compost sites, the processes allows little pieces of the plastic bags to remain in the compost,” Buckley said. “This creates a problem in the quality of finished compost that is used by gardeners.”

The new law applies to all residents who bag their yard waste for pick up. Those who don't have yard waste or who choose to compost their waste themselves will not be affected. Compostable bags are available at most retail stores.

